Weekly National Intelligencer.

WASHINGTON: SATURDAY, JULY 1[illegible], 1848. No. 366

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER

The subscription price of this paper for a year is Three Dollars, payable in advance.

For the long Sessions of Congress (averaging eight months) the price will be Two Dollars; for the short Sessions One Dollar per copy.

A reduction of 20 per cent. (or one-fifth of the full charge) will be made to any one who shall order and pay for, at one time, five copies of the Weekly paper; and a like reduction of 25 per cent. (or one-fourth of the full charge) to any one who will order and pay for at one time ten or more copies.

No *accounts* being kept for this paper, it will not be forwarded to any one unless paid for in advance, nor sent any longer than the time for which it is so paid for.

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER.

NOTES ON NEW BOOKS.

"History of Congress," Biographical and Political, comprising Memoirs of Members of the Congress of the United States, drawn from authentic sources; embracing the prominent events of their lives, and their connexion with the political history of the times: By Henry G. Wheeler. Illustrated by numerous steel portraits and fac-simile autographs. New York: Harper & Brothers: 1848." Vol. 1st, 8vo., 568 pp.

There are few literary tasks that can be more ungrateful, more difficult, or in general more unsuccessful than that of the Biography of the living. Thorny as is the undertaking of contemporary history, when one has shared in the events and passions which are to give it interest in another age; hard as it is to write the impersonal biography (as we may call it) of our country and our times, to delineate with historic impartiality individual public men whom we have been accustomed to look upon through the distorting lens of party or of personal prejudice, is yet far less easy. If distinguished, we admire or we dislike them too much; if little distinguished, they naturally desire that those who write of them should assist them to celebrity; and, whether really eminent or inconsiderable, they have each his body of adherents or friends, who are sure to take the sound of the day, the written impression (even if it be truly such) of but a moment in the public man's unfinished career, for the decisive and the eternal award of History itself. For it is still with all who have won, falsely or not, that which can seldom be sure—the instant's ascendency—as it was with him of old who, in the height of a prosperity that was but too soon to fail him, wished the Athenian sage to salute him as the happiest of men, and was told in reply "that no man could be pronounced upon before he was dead." That wise sentence is still as little as ever regarded by those whom the hand of Death has not yet measured, and by those who think to write them great or small, famous or obscure, while yet Fate has not finished with them.

To him, then, who seeks rather to make a reputation for himself than others, few enterprises are less inviting than that of writing the lives of the living. The thing is, indeed, as we have just now intimated, a sort of literary solecism; for how should a life be written which is not yet ended? Contemporary biography is, then, on one side, hardly less than a paradox; and, on the other, it is almost sure to degenerate into either a satire or a panegyric. In this country, where every body has need of every body, it is the latter of these two tendencies which usually takes effect. We have paused, after the assertion, to consider whether we could recollect, in all past American attempts at this branch of History, any exception to the fact; and we can call to mind none. Our Lives of the Living have constantly been almost as exaggerated and encomiastic as Dedications were wont to be, or as Epitaphs still are.

The truth being, then, that biographies of men who are written about because they are still flourishing must usually be eulogistic, how comes it that both the magnifier and the magnified so seldom reflect how vain is all that panegyric can heap up; how mere a tinsel is that which it can spread over a name; how soon a little wind and weather strips it off, and how idle it is to hope to foist upon the future, for any man, a false renown? Power and notoriety are the nearly universal passions of our land, and yet surely there is no country where the moralist's old lesson of their emptiness is half so strong or so easy to read: nowhere so much did ever

> "Unnumbered suppliants crowd preferment's gate,
> For wealth athirst and burning to be great:
> Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,
> They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.
> On every stage, the foes of peace attend;
> Hate dogs their rise and insult marks their end.
> Love ends with hope; the sinking statesman's door
> Pours in the morning worshippers no more;
> His pen for growing names the author plies,
> To growing power the office-hunter flies:
> From every room descends the painted face,
> That hung the bright palladium of the place,
> And, smoked in kitchens or in auctions sold,
> To better features leaves the frame of gold!
> For now no more are traced, in every line,
> Heroic worth, benevolence divine;
> The form distorted justifies the fall,
> And detestation rids th' indignant wall.

Is, then, (we shall be asked,) contemporary biography no legitimate branch of historical composition? That is a question which must be answered out of fact, a better guide of Criticism than is any body's *dictum* of a literary law. Let us see, then, whether there is any production, in the line of which we are speaking, that does rank among books of History? Scarcely; and, singularly enough, the only things which approach to becoming exceptions are certain Lives which not others have writ, but which great men have left of their own actions—such as Julius Cæsar's and Napoleon Bonaparte's account of their own campaigns, or Sully's or De Retz's memoirs of themselves. This kind of book, indeed, falls rather into the rank of *memoirs pour servir*, of materials for History, than of History itself. Their almost inevitable want of impartiality, of the possibility of exact and full truth, of the collation and criticism of every source of information, of that due estimate of men and things which the immediate times can hardly ever reach, do not permit them to rise to the sober and solid character of that wise and greatly comprehensive thing, History.

We must conclude, then, that works of the sort which we are examining almost necessarily incur the fault of partiality, and will nearly always be panegyrical. So even biographies written at a distance must usually be; for, involuntarily, when we write a man's life, he becomes our hero, and we magnify his acts, to ennoble our own performance. It is our business, then, in estimating works of Contemporary Biography, to accept this partiality as one of the conditions under which they must be written: we must only see that they do not exceed the permitted measure and become mere panegyrics. The main question as to their merit will then lie in this: whether they do or do not afford the due materials for a knowledge of the times and events in which the men to whom they relate have played a part? The author of such a book may be allowed to decorate the individuals of whom he writes; but he must not distort events. We can suffer him to embellish his figures where there was not grace, to magnify where there was not stature: for some exaggeration may have a pleasing effect; or rather there be times, and men that leave little possibility of any such effect, without some touching off, some poetic heightening. Upon the whole, then, we must grant to the literary limner of the living that license, without which his brother, the portrait-painter, could not (as every body knows) earn his daily salt, let alone his bread: the license, that is to say, of bestowing where it is needed a little embellishment, by way of redressing the wrongs which Nature seems to have taken pleasure in heaping upon some people's countenances. He who drew every sitter just as he is would soon be driven from society, by the sovereign voice of a majority, as the cruellest of caricaturists; and indeed, seeing how large a part of mankind are very little more than a rather better-looking sort of monkey, the artist should, perhaps, be treated as a *hostem humani generis*, who could have the heart to show so many folks to themselves in all their proper hideousness. Well, the portrait and the character-painter are victims to a common necessity of not, by too severe truth, making enemies of all their sitters, and the families and friends of their sitters. We must allow both to beautify a little; exacting only that the face, though flattered, shall be recognizable at the first glance, and that, lest proportion be lost, there shall be an equitable embellishment of all alike. If the short are set upon stilts, the tall must be lifted upon poles; if every mortal is to receive the lineaments of a hero, then each hero must take the semblance of a god. In short, we must not permit the living to be confounded in one universal blaze of exaggeration.

So much for what we conceive to be the general rules—perhaps not considered by certain of our contemporaries—under which productions like that before us come. We proceed to examine how far the present performance will sustain their application.

The author has brought to it the quality which is the peculiar one requisite to his undertaking—a thorough knowledge, that is to say, of the men and things of whom he is to treat. Long a leading Congressional Reporter, he is master, of course, of all that which a man must have in order to be a Reporter at all—namely, a great facility and pliancy in composition; general information enough to catch, at the first word, all allusions and illustrations; an intimate acquaintance with the political and party history of our country. Few persons, in short, better understand the anatomy, physiology, and (we may add) psychology, general and special, of that great nondescript, a United States Congress: a thing which—besides being, in its proper representative character, the epitome of a whole nation, most mutable and most various, most wise and weak, most instructed and ignorant, most excellent in discourse and most empty, most courageous to act and yet most dilatory and inefficient, most prudent and rash, most economical and extravagant—is as pretty a microcosm as heart could desire of all that moralists have said or sung of human contradictions: so that it may say of the land and of itself, with singular truth—

> How beautiful is all this visible earth,
> How glorious in its action and itself!
> But we, that boast ourselves its masters, we,
> Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
> To sink or soar, with our mixt essence make
> A conflict of its elements, and breathe
> The breath of degradation and of pride,
> Contending with low wants and lofty will,
> Till our mortality predominates,
> And men are—what they own not to themselves,
> And trust not to each other!

Possibly, with all his Congressional experience, Mr. Wheeler did not originally, any more than have done certain of his critics, conceive all the difficulties of what he has set about. The trial of a thing is, however, marvellously instructive, as they would presently find who have been in haste to condemn his book, obviously (we think) without having examined its contents, except through the *table* of these, nor read even this further than to ascertain how many comparative pages were given to the several biographies. The fact is plainly betokened by the precipitancy with which we perceive that a leading journal has, in a notice quite as positive as it is brief, condemned the performance, in very harsh terms, as giving, out of partiality, a large space to Lives (particularly in one instance) which do not excite any special interest, and as giving, on the other hand, but a narrow space to men of more mark. Such is the *printed* judgment which we have met in one influential quarter; and, guided probably by that criticism, many among the political party in Congress to which *does not* belong the member apparently favored with a large share of pages seem to have inferred that the book is written to magnify the Democratic party at the expense of the Whigs. Meantime, by a very curious concurrence of mistakes, and as if to show that Whigs and Democrats can as little agree in criticism as in politics, we find that leading persons in the public Departments have refused to take the book, as embodying, in that very Life (Senator Douglas's) which has excited the wrath of their adversaries, views entirely Whig! We need hardly say that these contradictory accusations of unfairness, of bias, are strong *prima facie* evidence that Mr. Wheeler is impartial, and that he is only paying, under the complaints of which we have spoken, the usual penalty, like Pope's—

> In moderation placing all his glory,
> While Tories call him Whig, and Whigs a Tory.

Now, as a man who has himself carefully surveyed a country can usually, by the description which another person gives of it, tell whether he has ever gone over it or not, so, we think, we can generally, after reading a book, judge with some certainty whether a brother critic has or has not observed that ceremony, before pronouncing upon it. And thus, in the present instance, we should have very little hesitation in deciding that they who describe, as we have seen, the book in question, have done like a traveller who writes a very positive account of a kingdom of some extent, when he has only gone to the frontier and peeped into it. Certainly, the practice of the present day is, among Reviewers, much like that administration of justice which our own imaginary *Judge Lynch* borrowed from Lydford in England, and which the magistrates of that equitable old borough probably borrowed from Judge Rhadamanth:* like those worthies of ancient jurisprudence, the modern reviewer punishes first, and—if he ever reads—reads the evidence afterwards.

Doubtless we ourselves, for the expedition of justice, sometimes find that mode of procedure not only convenient, but most necessary: for there be volumes enough, in the present crowded state of the literary docket and the actual enormous growth of literary crime, which one has no need to be the judge Page of Pope's time, in order to hang before you hear.† But one should know with whom to deal after this fashion, and should administer this sort of Crown Law only to ascertained or obvious blockheads. Such is always our own practice: wherever there is, from the known character of of an author, any hope that we shall be better able to criticise his book *after* than *before* the having read it, we constantly make it a point to go through that labor of preparation, sad one as it often is; and, upon the whole, unusual as is our course, we suspect that our criticism is all the better for it.

The boldness of Mr. Wheeler's undertaking, his known and indeed unusual competency to it, and the importance of such a book, if well executed, to not only the future historian but the present politician of our own country and of all others which the study of our affairs can enlighten, left us no choice but attentively to peruse this specimen of his labors that are to be, this *coup d'essai*, this trial of his strength—this experimental volume, as the first in a novel and large design must always of necessity be. Before saying how far *we* are satisfied with it, we will endeavor to remove some of those false impressions which others have taken up.

The author has obviously perceived and obeyed that law of Living Biography which we have already explained: the temper of his book, that is to say, is, in regard to persons, eulogistic. It is clearly not so, however, beyond what we consider the almost unavoidable measure. Men seem a good deal taller on the stage than off it, and a giant at a distance looks puny in comparison with a common man near us. We see no instance of any servile, any excessive exaggeration of men's abilities or eloquence or other merit. If over-estimated, they are over-estimated by the same scale. It strikes us, indeed, that the praise distributed is usually put into rather cold and conventional terms, not by any means such as vain or ambitious public men would *pay* for. We have remarked no instance of the contrary, unless it be (as some may think) in the case of a Southern member, whose generous and kindly personal qualities and liberal and honest public ones make it difficult not to overrate his eloquence. On the other hand, it is difficult not to be struck with the fairness with which Mr. Giddings—a gentleman by no means kindly regarded (politically speaking) except by the small party of the Abolitionists—is treated, despite of prejudices in which the biographer himself plainly shares. As with individuals, so with parties: the book seems to us as resolutely fair as any man could well be who had an opinion of his own: and how should any body be capable of writing on such subjects who is inert enough *not* to have any opinion as between parties? There is no effort to exhibit one party to its disadvantage, or to apologize for the other. We see no case where the contrary might be held, except that of the history of the Oregon question attached to the Life of Mr. Douglas; and *there*, how could any body *pretend* to write like a historian without so stating the facts that they would tell against Mr. Polk?

The next point to be set right is this—the disproportionate length of the biographies, or rather of a particular one, where the hero does not tower above every body else in greatness as he does in his number of pages. Senator Douglas, that is to say, occupies one hundred and twelve pages, while nobody else covers more than about half that space. Here, however, the disproportion vanishes the instant the fact is stated that just eighty of these pages are a history of the Oregon question, not of Mr. Douglas, who is thus reduced to only thirty-two pages. That history has obviously been embodied where it stands, not because Mr. Douglas played any leading part in it, but because it was his fortune to be, in the House of Representatives, the mover of the resolution for terminating our joint occupancy with Great Britain; which fact offered the properest hook on which to hang the account of the whole. Mr. D. makes no particular figure in the story, and is but moderately magnified in the life, nearly three-fourths of which tells against his views on one of the only two great public questions where he has been at all conspicuous.

The misapprehension incurred in this case ought perhaps to admonish Mr. Wheeler not again to attach the history of a particular measure or policy or event to an individual life. We foresee that his Biography of Measures will make the most valuable part of his work, and will become not merely the general guide to our Congressional history, but itself a leading authority, which must be in the hands and at the finger-ends of all who engage in our political discussions, whether from the desk or the stump. Others are to come in his next volume, which will be of great importance in the canvass now at hand.

In short, we do not see that either of our public parties is to gain from such a historian, except just so far as the written truth will profit them. And, let us add, that, in a system like ours, nothing is so necessary as exact and authoritative political records to check party and personal aberrations.

What Goldsmith says, in the opening of his Life of Parnell, of poets, is in the main as true of our politicians; their peaceful lives, spent in making people happy, should have little of adventure. For, as the history of happy nations is dull, so should be that of the men that make them happy. Few of the biographies in this first of Mr. Wheeler's volumes are at all eventful.

We have not left ourselves space to give examples of the manner in which the book is executed as to style. Its general character is, however, lucid, earnest, and business-like—proper parliamentary, we should say; with few defects, and not ambitious of beauties.

* See Sixth Æneid, where the Sybil who shows the Trojan traveller the antiquities of the place tells him—

> Gnossius hæc Rhadamanthus durissima regna habet,
> Castigatque auditque dolos.

As for Lydford, see the pleasant old lawyer's ballad, in Grose's "Provincial Glossary," founded on the local proverb—

> First hang and draw;
> Then hear the cause, is Lydford law.

† Fury and froth expect from Dennis' rage;
Hard words and hanging, should your judge be Page.

Massachusetts.—Gen. Leslie Combs, of Kentucky, addressed a large meeting of Whigs at Faneuil Hall, Boston, on Monday night last. His speech was received throughout with the greatest manifestations of enthusiasm, and the speaker was repeatedly interrupted with huzzas for the Hero of Buena Vista. The meeting adjourned with nine hearty cheers for Old Zack, and three for Gen. Combs and Kentucky.

Alabama.—A large and enthusiastic Whig meeting was held at Mobile on Saturday week, to ratify the Whig nominations for the offices of President and Vice President. The Hon. S. S. Prentiss, Balie Peyton, and Judge Hopkins addressed the meeting, and resolutions were adopted pledging a cordial and zealous support to the nominees, hailing them "as a guaranty of success and the harbinger of incalculable good to our country."

PROGRESS OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT.

Ohio.—Extract from a letter written by a gentleman of great purity of character and moral worth, highly respected, and in whose opinion full reliance may be placed. It is dated Warren, Trumbull county, Ohio, June 24, 1848.

"We had a glorious good 'Rough and Ready' meeting last Tuesday night, and good speeches from B. F. Wade and Van R. Humphrey, Esqs. The meeting was very large; the court-house was filled to overflowing, and an attentive audience listened with great interest to the arguments of Messrs. Wade and Humphrey. Much enthusiasm pervaded the audience, and at half-past ten o'clock we adjourned, with three good and hearty cheers for 'Old Zach.'

"The dissatisfaction is fast disappearing, and with a vigorous, united, and determined effort on the part of those who are determined to stand by the plighted faith of the party will give us a victory, for its completeness unequalled by any thing in the history of our party."

A gentleman from Erie county, Ohio, writes, after stating the efforts made at Washington by a Whig member of Congress who wrote to the Hon. George Rathbun, formerly a member of Congress from New-York, to get up a third party by uniting the disaffected Whigs and Barnburners, that "he," the member of Congress, "may do as he pleases, we shall keep Old *Rough* and *Ready* so far ahead they cannot harm him. I am of the opinion that the enthusiasm will be very great here this fall for Taylor."

A gentleman writes from Cuyahoga county that "The defection on the Reserve may be large; but it is not confined to the Whig party. Let us go as we may, Cass will not get a majority on the Reserve. The rest of the State will give a very decided majority, I have no doubt, for Gen. Taylor. I care nothing about the stories in circulation. The show of anti-Taylorism, be it more or less, will save us the doubtful Whig counties in the State election. All the bolters prefer Taylor to Cass, and will not throw away their votes if they think the Cass prospects bright. I think we shall carry the State handsomely in October."

Virginia.—Extract of a letter from a gentleman of high respectability in Middle Virginia to a member of Congress, dated July 10, 1848.

"We have reason to believe that 'Old Zach's' prospects are decidedly better in this section (the Valley) of Virginia than those of the Whigs have ever been since the organization of the party; as an evidence of this, the Locofocos at a meeting held a few days since, appointed a committee to take the *written obligations* of the members of their party to vote for Cass, fearing they might commit themselves to Taylor; but all these precautions will not avail, for many will jump the fence despite their leaders."

The reader could not have failed to notice in the report of the proceedings of the House of Representatives on Tuesday, the action on the important subject of the improvement of the Rivers and Harbors of the United States. Mr. Polk and his Vetoes are condemned by the Representatives of the people. And yet what practical good does the condemnation effect? There stands the *Veto!* and IT PREVAILS against the will of the People as expressed through their representatives. Is not this a fact which appeals to true republicans? What can more clearly show the evils of the one-man power?—*Alexandria Gazette.*

We understand that the name of Metis has been adopted at the National Observatory in this city for the new planet.

Narrow Escape from a Horrible Death.—On the night of the 4th, just as the cars were about to start upon the Worcester Railroad, a drunken man was found extended upon the track. A moment later twenty heavily-laden cars would have passed over his body. On the night of the last fourth of July a similar discovery was made just in season to save life. [*Boston Traveller.*

Longevity.—Mrs. Mary Bacon, aged one hundred and eight years, died in Providence, R. I., on Monday afternoon last, at her residence on Westminster street. She was probably the oldest person in the State, as she certainly was in this city. The accuracy of her age seems to be placed beyond controversy by the following record in the office of the city clerk: "Mary Mathewson, daughter of John Mathewson and Phœbe his wife, was born at Providence the tenth day of June, 1740." She was married early in life, and was not long after left a widow. She had two children, both of whom died young. At the time of her death, she had no nearer blood relatives than the grandchildren of her brother, the late Col. John Mathewson, who died in 1816, aged 73 years, and who is well remembered by many of our older citizens as an active and conspicuous man in his day. He owned nearly all the land now known as Point Pleasant. Mrs. Bacon enjoyed very tolerable health until a few weeks previous to her death. Her departure from time was attended with no sickness, no pain. "Of no distemper, of no blast she died, but fell like autumn fruit that mellowed long." [*Providence Journal.*

Frightful Scene in a Menagerie.—At Stafford, on Friday evening, the company of visitors who had assembled in Wombwell's menagerie, now exhibiting in that town, were alarmed by the following occurrence: In the early part of the morning a lion and lioness, recently purchased, were added to the collection, and about nine o'clock one of the keepers, William Wombwell, nephew to the proprietor, entered the den in which they were placed, and they then displayed no symptoms of ferocity. In the evening the same keeper entered the den for the purpose of showing the spectators the command he had over these brutes of the forest. Scarcely had he laid down with them when the lioness darted up, and, with savage ferocity, seized him by the neck, tearing the scalp off the back part of his head, and frightfully lacerating his neck with her fangs. During this time the lion had thrown himself across the body of the unfortunate man, as if to overpower him. Shrieks arose from the spectators, and instantly a rush was made to the entrance. Another keeper, seizing a piece of iron, instantly made for the den, and, with much effect, struck both brutes over the head. They ran from the wounded keeper, who was then removed. His death was expected. [*English paper.*

Melancholy Accident.—John A. Hellings, late landlord of the Steamboat Hotel, in South Trenton, accidentally shot himself on Saturday last, on his farm, near Bristol, (Pa.) Mr. Hellings took his gun to the cornfield for the purpose (as he had informed his family) of shooting a crow. He had been gone but a few minutes when the report of his gun was heard, but of course no alarm was created thereby. Several hours having passed without his return, search was made, when Mr. Hellings was found lying beside the cornfield fence, shot entirely through the heart. The unfortunate man had climbed the fence, and, in carelessly pulling the gun over afterwards, was shot as above described.

The Sabbath.—A recent important decision has been made by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, upon the constitutionality of the laws enjoining the observance of Sunday as a day of rest from labor. The opinion of the Court is, that the law is constitutional, being a social and political regulation, giving a preference to no religious establishment or mode of worship.

OBITUARY.

A Letter received in this city yesterday announces the decease of a distinguished Matron, a relict of the era of the Revolution, in the person of Mrs. Julia Rush, widow of the distinguished Dr. Benjamin Rush, and Mother of the Hon. Richard Rush, now Minister of the United States to France. She died on Friday night last, in the ninetieth year of her age, at Sydenham, near Philadelphia, (the residence of her Son.) She was the Sister of the late Hon. Richard Stockton, of New Jersey, and Grandmother, therefore, of Comm. R. F. Stockton, U. S. Navy. She was venerable not only for her age, but for her valuable qualities; and has left many relatives and friends to bear testimony to the excellence of her life.

Steam Overcoming the Rapids of the St. Lawrence.—The good people of Montreal, Canada, were surprised a few days ago by the appearance of two United States steamers at that port. The circumstance is thus explained in the New York Commercial:

"We have been favored with a letter from Alexander V. Frazer, Esq., of Washington, under whose direction the two vessels above named were taken from Lakes Erie and Ontario to Montreal, for the purpose of being brought round to the Atlantic coast to be employed in that service. These steamers draw seven feet ten inches water. The Dallas was built on Lake Erie, and passed through the Welland Canal into Lake Ontario. The Jefferson was built at Oswego, and intended for Lake Ontario. After such an exploit in the navigation of the rapids of the St. Lawrence by steam we will marvel at nothing that shall be projected, but expect its accomplishment. Mr. Frazer writes that the arrival of the Dallas and the Jefferson in the port of Montreal attracted great attention. He and all the officers have received great attention from Lord Elgin, the Governor-General, and from all the officers of the Government, both civil and military. Indeed, the entire population manifest a lively interest and the best feeling on the occasion, he and his companions being literally overwhelmed with civilities of the most gratifying nature."

RETURNING FROM THE WAR.

Major Gen. Patterson has arrived at New Orleans, with a large number of officers and soldiers of the Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, and Alabama volunteers, and of the Ohio and Massachusetts regiments. Vera Cruz was quite healthy. Nothing new from the city of Mexico.

Troops are almost daily arriving at New Orleans. The greatest activity prevails in shipping them from Vera Cruz, and, if our figures do not deceive us, at least 10,000 had departed from the latter place before the end of June.

The "Union" commences a long homily with the text, "The moral power of any party is in its opinions." This is only true when its practice attests the sincerity and earnestness of its opinions. It was Mr. Polk's opinion, clear and unquestionable, that we were entitled to "54 40," but his moral power only reached "49."—*Leesburg Whig.*

[Washington Correspondence of North American.]

Mr. Hale, of New Hampshire—the "Liberty" candidate for the Presidency—is not only a man of cleverness and parts, but withal a very good fellow and no little of a wag. During the discursive debate in the Senate on Wednesday last, upon an interrogatory being propounded to Mr. Foote—as to the conduct of Gen. Cass—Mr. Hale, with much affected gravity, raised a point of order, alleging that it seemed to him entirely inconsistent, when a Presidential candidate had resigned his seat to avoid expressing his opinions, that his friends should be catechized as to those opinions.

Mr. Foote. As the Senator from New Hampshire is an aspirant himself, what does he think a candidate ought to do?

Mr. Hale, (with promptitude and humor.) *Why, stand up and face the music.*

Reported Loss of Whale Ships.—The last India mail received in England brings dates from China to April 26th. The Vishnur, from New Hebrides, arrived at Hong Kong, reports the loss of seventeen American whale ships in the typhoon, on the northwest coast of China, in October last. The *China Mail* says the loss of the seventeen American whalers is exaggerated; that the majority have escaped. The Vishnur touched at Ascension on the 11th of March, where she learned from Capt. Swain, of the whale ship Potomac, who had lately arrived from the coast of Japan, that in September he was in company with upwards of thirty whale ships on the coast of Japan. They experienced a severe typhoon in lat. 35 N., and after it had subsided seventeen of the ships were missing. There is a probability of several having been lost; but the opinion of an experienced captain is, that during the gale many vessels were driven from their cruising ground, and, as the season was nearly over, bore away for the neighborhood of the equator, and, not having been seen by their consorts, were considered lost.

Shameful Doings in Providence.—A Mr. Thomas Mann, of Providence, who has taken a prominent stand in the liquor prosecutions, has drawn upon himself the ill will of some most graceless rascal, who has made repeated attempts to injure him and his friends. A bottle of vitriol, last week, was thrown into the window of a room where several ladies were sitting, and an attempt to murder Mr. Mann and his family was made on Wednesday night. A quantity of gunpowder or gun cotton was inserted between the walls of Mr. Mann's house and that of an adjoining building, and fired. The explosion tore to pieces the side-walls of both houses, and broke nearly all the glass in the buildings in the neighborhood, in some cases driving in the sashes entire. A man, named Calder, who was passing at the time of the explosion, was severely burnt by the falling fragments. The inmates of the house escaped. A scoundrel who would be guilty of such atrocity, should pass his days in the penitentiary, and doubtless will. A reward of $3,000 has been offered for him.

A Dead Failure.—It seems difficult to get a response to the nomination of Cass in old Huntingdon, (Pa.) The Journal (speaking of a meeting called for last Saturday) says it was a dead failure. At 9 o'clock it was not visible in the open air; it was, therefore, adjourned to Couts's back room, where, with the aid of a candle, it was discovered that ten men and five boys were in attendance.—*North Amer.*

Fatal Railroad Accident.—As the train of cars from Concord, (N. H.) on Saturday morning, was approaching the depot in Manchester, at the usual speed, a young woman attempted to cross the track in front of the engine. She was knocked down and run over by the train, the upper part of her head being cut off as with a knife. She died instantly.

Another.—Miss Riley, an Irish girl, a domestic in the employ of Mr. Gray, of Tewksbury, was killed by the Lawrence train on Wednesday afternoon. She was returning to her home in Tewksbury, from Lowell, and, in attempting to get from the rail cars while the train was backing, was caught and drawn under the wheels of the engine, and had both legs cut off. She died in a few minutes.

At Prague, the King having refused to confirm the Provisional Government, and Prince Windschgratz having erected batteries round the town, the mob and the students rose *en masse* and demanded arms. A collision having ensued between the Burgher guard and the populace, some assassin seized the opportunity to indulge his private malice by firing a rifle at the Princess Windschgratz, who was shot in the head. The victim was the daughter of the celebrated Prince Schwartzenbourg. One of the princess's sons was also mortally wounded. In these exciting circumstances, Prince Windschgratz, with great calmness and dignity, entreated the mob to disperse; but to no effect. They endeavored to hang him up to a lamp by a rope, which they procured, when he was rescued by his grenadiers. At five o'clock, the people not having taken down the barricades as he had required, he ordered heavy guns to be brought into play, and he continued firing until 10 o'clock at night. The conflict lasted, almost without intermission, during the next day, and by the latest accounts, we hear that Prague was a heap of ruins. In consequence of this bombardment, Prince Windschgratz had retreated from the city with the garrison, and occupied the heights commanding the town.

NIAGARA FALLS SUSPENSION BRIDGE.

This suspension bridge is the most sublime work of art on the continent. It makes the head dizzy to look at it, and yet it is traversed with as much security as any other bridge of the same width. We were present while the workmen were engaged in hanging the planks over the fearful chasm. It looked like a work of peril, but it was prosecuted with entire safety. Not an accident has happened since the first cord was carried across the river at the tail of a kite.

It is impossible to give the reader a clear idea of the work. Imagine a foot bridge, eight hundred feet in length, hung in the air at the height of two hundred and thirty feet, over a vast body of water rushing through a narrow gorge at the rate of thirty miles an hour. If you are below it, it looks like a strip of paper suspended by a cobweb. When the wind is strong the frail gossamer-looking structure sways to and fro, as if ready to start from its fastenings, and it shakes from extremity to centre under the firm tread of the pedestrian. But there is no danger. Men pass over it with perfect safety, while the head of the timid looker-on swims with apprehension.

We saw the first person pass over it—Mr. Ellet, the builder. His courageous wife soon followed him, and for two days hundreds, attracted by the novelty of the thing, took the fearful journey.

It is worth a trip to the Falls to see this great work, although it is not probable that one in twenty will have the nerve to cross upon it; for, strange as it may seem, there were those who had no hesitation to slide over the awful chasm, in a basket, upon a single wire cable, who could not be induced to walk over the bridge. And this aerial excursion is thrillingly exciting. A seat on a locomotive, travelling at the rate of sixty miles an hour, is nothing to it. When you find yourself suspended in the air, with the roaring, rushing, boiling Niagara two hundred and fifty feet below you, if your heart do not flutter, you will have nerve enough to swing over Vesuvius. And yet the sensation is not altogether unpleasant. The ride itself, as the old lady said about skinning eels, "is nothing when you get used to it."—*Rochester Democrat.*

Niagara Suspension Bridge—Narrow Escape.—We must acknowledge (says the Commercial Advertiser) that we have read the account lately published in this and other papers, of crossing the chasm over the Niagara river in a basket drawn by a single wire, and more recently of persons passing from one cliff to the other on foot by the temporary bridge lately completed, with a feeling that we at least should not be willing to make either experiment. It was with little surprise, therefore, that we read the following narrative in the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser of Tuesday:

"We learn that a thrilling scene occurred at the suspension bridge at Niagara Falls yesterday afternoon. Four men were passing over the bridge when it was struck with one of those sudden and strong gusts of wind which frequently rush through the chasm with the tremendous force of a hurricane, and so twisted it as to turn it bottom upward. The men caught in the wires, and in this position—suspended about 200 feet above the restless waters beneath—they were enabled to maintain themselves until the alarm was given at the Falls, a mile and a half distant, and the whole population in a body rushed to the rescue. The bridge was restored to its former position and the men saved. We have not learned the particulars, but can well imagine the deep sensation of the spectators, as well as those whose lives hung upon a thread as it were, during the time which intervened between the accident and the rescue."